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## MOSES: HIS AGE AND HIS WORK.

### II.

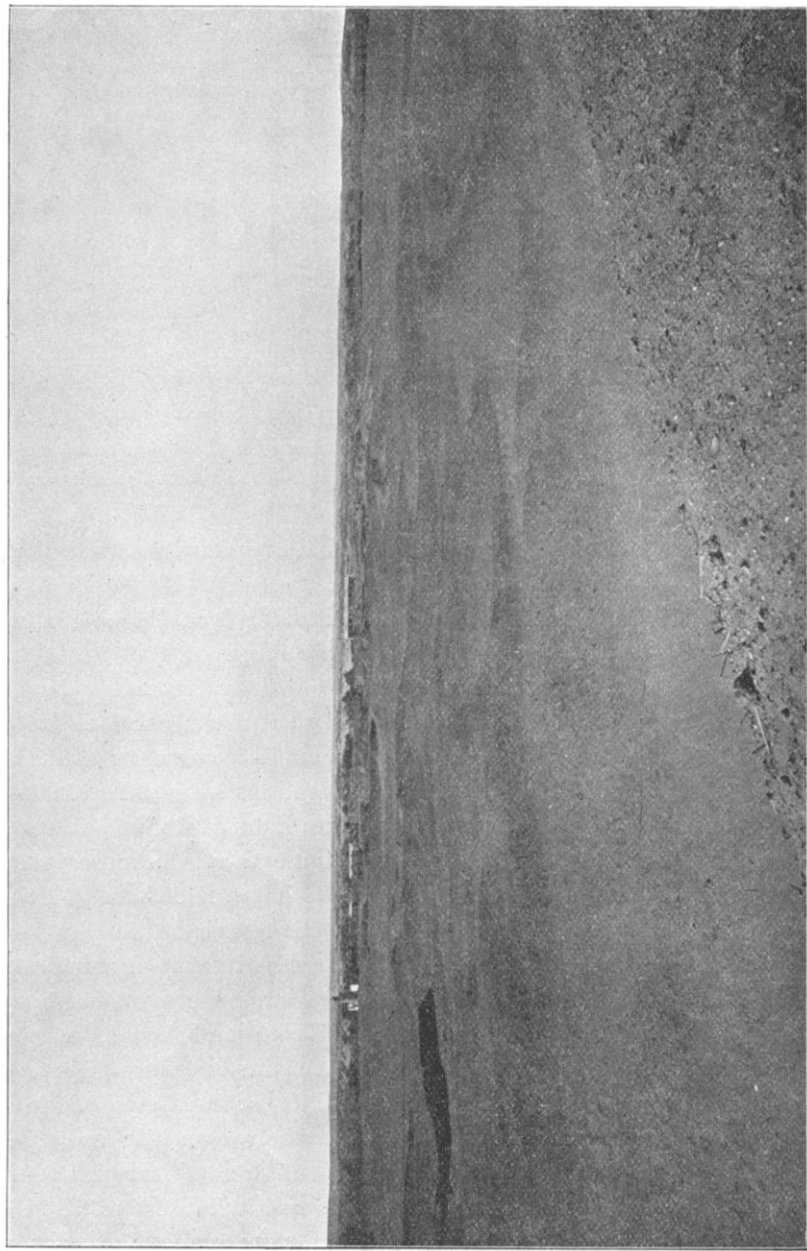
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*The birth and early history of Moses.—His faith in the deliverance of his people.—Did he write the Law?—A child of his age.—The creator of Israel and Israel's relation to Yahweh.—What this original Israel was.—Who was Yahweh?—Moses' death.—The relation of natural law and individual influence seen in Moses' work in Israel.—Behind and within all is God.*

Mosheh ben Amram was in all probability born in Sopd, the twentieth nome in Lower Egypt, whose capital a Denderah list calls Kosem, the Goshen of the Bible, Ptolemy's *Απαβας νομος*, in the beginning of the century, during the reign of Ramessu II. (1348–1281). His name is Egyptian. It may originally have been theophorous like Dehutimose, “offspring of Dehuti.” Egyptian names can scarcely have been less common on the Erythræan than they had been for generations in Syria. Phinehas is another instance in the immediate family. His parents, were, no doubt, Semites. Since time immemorial these regions had been the haunts of Semitic tribes. I have elsewhere (*Hebraica*, Vol. x.) attempted to prove that the *Aperiu* of the Egyptian monuments and the Ibru Naharan of Minæan inscription (Halévy 535) may have belonged to the large family of nations including, besides Moab and Ammon, Edom and Israel, many Mesopotamian and Arabic tribes which the Eponym lists of Genesis designate as descendants of Eber or Hebrews. As a rule these strangers seem to have lived their own life uninfluenced by the language, customs and religion of the natives. Occasionally, however, they would be pressed into service. It is intrinsically probable that some of them were employed in the building of Pi Tum, the modern Tell el Maskhuta, by Ramessu



MOUNDS FORMED OF THE RUINS OF PI TUM—POSSIBLY ONE OF THE CITIES BUILT BY THE HEBREWS.

II. The native records show with sufficient clearness that the Egyptian taskmasters did not distinguish themselves by extraordinary gentleness.

It may have been early in the reign of Mer-en-Ptah (1281-69) that some fresh outrage, some act of cruelty and injustice, by one of the Egyptian officials, brought Moses, still a young man, out into the light of history. Incensed at the man's conduct he slew him, but was in consequence forced to betake himself, a homicide and a fugitive from justice, to his kinsmen on the Sinaitic peninsula. The event was decisive in two directions. A man cannot shed another man's blood in defense of a member of his tribe straightway to forget the incident, least of all would this be possible for a Semite. On the other hand, the affair brought Moses into a new social and religious *milieu*. Cain and Midian occupied the shores of the Akabah and their pastures reached into the mountains of Et Tor. Three of their priestly chiefs, Reûel, Hobab and Jethro became related to Moses by marriage. Their social organization conformed to the best traditions of the desert. Whether they had yet been influenced by the kingdom of Main, is uncertain. The Hebrew accounts force upon us the conviction that they were Yahweh worshipers. Our earliest Judæan chronicler knows well that Cain (the Kenite) since earliest times has offered sacrifices to Yahweh, and all accounts agree that Midianite priests worshiped Yahweh at the holy mount, and that Moses had his first revelation of Yahweh in "the land of Midian." "Yahweh-nisi," probably the modern El Maharrat, Horeb, probably the modern Jebel Aribeh and Sinai, probably the modern Ras Sufsafeh, seem to have been their chief shrines. Circumcision was one of their sacred rites. Sipporah, daughter of a Midianite priest, rebuked Moses for neglecting it, Ex. 4:24. According to Exodus 18 Moses learned from Jethro the use of the *torah*, or the oracular decision by the casting of lots. The Yahweh sign that Cain wears is probably a mark between his eyes such as the prophet rebuking Ahab covered by a bandage.<sup>1</sup> Yahweh may not have been the only god worshiped by Midian and Cain, nor these the only nations worshiping him.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stade, ZAW, XIV., II, p. 250 ff.

There was a Briti Yah in Palestine in the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> But had Moses learned the Yahweh cult in Palestine, tradition would not have forgotten it.

Upon the Sinaitic mountain tops, his home, Yahweh revealed himself to Moses. He saw his glory in the heavenly fire; he heard his voice in the thunder; the storm-clouds were his Kerubim, the lightnings were his seraphim. At last there came to him on Horeb, by some sacred tree, illumined strangely by the fire from heaven, a message to his inmost soul to go back into Goshen on the twofold errand of making Yahweh known and delivering his people. It was the prophet's call. It was a real ecstatic experience, like that of David under the *baka*-tree, Elijah on the mountain, Isaiah in the temple, Ezekiel on the Khebar, Jesus in the Jordan, Paul on the Damascus road. It was the perpetual mystery of the divine touching the human.

From time to time news must have reached him of how his brethren fared in Goshen. Mer en Ptah repelled the northern invaders, kept close guard on the eastern frontier, renewed the treaty with the Hittite king, aided his Syrian subjects in a famine, and slept with his fathers. He was followed by his son, Seti II. (1269-1267), and he again by Amen-mose (1267-1262), an usurper. Whether his successor, Si Ptah (1262-1259), was likewise an usurper, as Meyer thinks, or a son of Seti I., as Wiedemann assumes, is doubtful.

It was probably in the time of Si Ptah that Moses returned to Egypt to deliver his people. His appeal to them in the name of Yahweh to throw off the yoke met with no hearty response; and his stratagem to be able to pass the border on a royal leave of absence by urging upon the king the necessity of celebrating the pesah feast in the desert would, no doubt, under ordinary circumstances have proved a dismal failure, and even as it was could not be carried out. But a series of calamities of the kind that the Nile Valley is especially exposed to, culminating in an outbreak of pestilence, conspired to make the plan of escape successful. Political disaffection also seems to have helped to further the movement and to swell the rebel ranks. From vari-

<sup>1</sup> W. Max Müller, *loc. cit.*, pp. 162, 312.

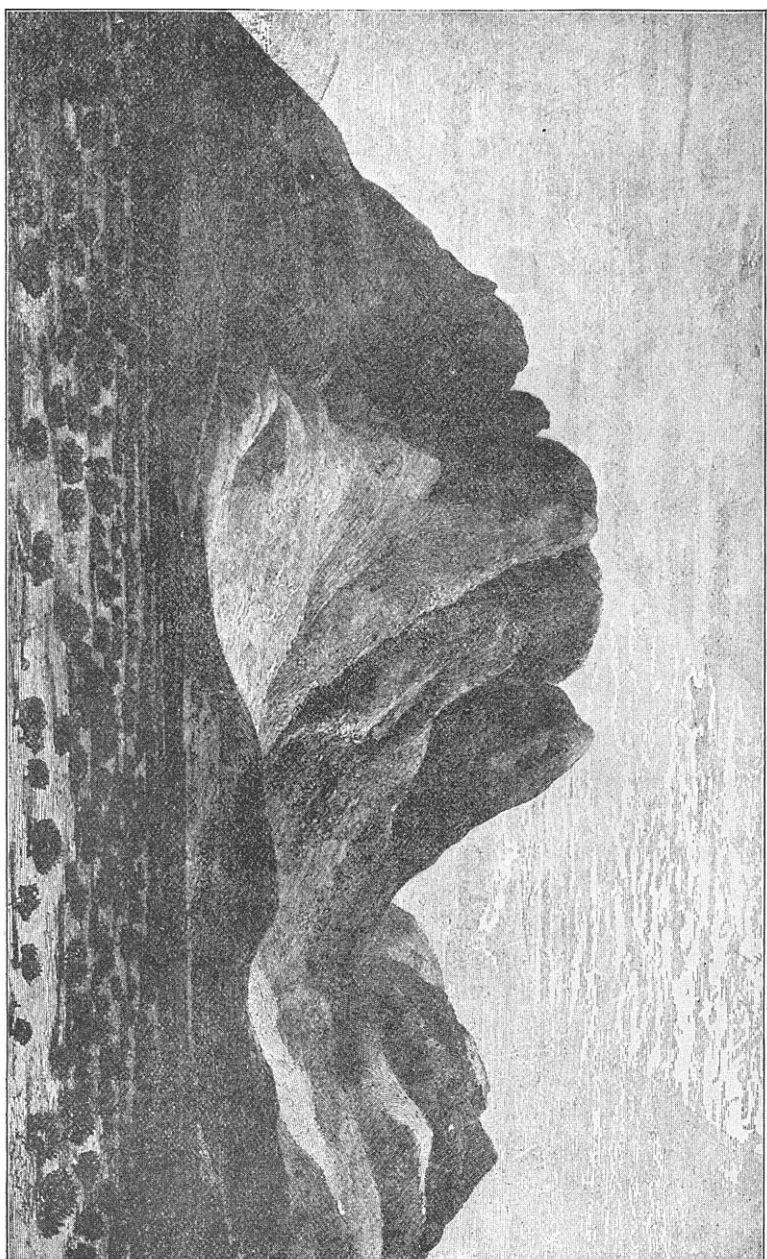
ous parts of the Eastern Delta they come, slaves from Pi Tum, citizens from Heliopolis, as Manetho's story suggests, herdsmen from Goshen, with their families and their cattle. From bondage and oppression, from plague that spared neither high nor low, they fled in the direction of Lake Timzah, as it would appear, robbing and plundering as they went. Moses at first attempted to escape "by the way of the Philistines," as a later writer has it, *i. e.*, in a northeasterly direction. The report of a pursuing army led them, however, to pass southward along the Bitter Lakes, possibly in the hope of gathering reinforcements or of avoiding an immediate direct conflict in the Mokattam Mountains. This, unfortunately, drove them into a *cul de sac* between the mountains and the sea, with the pursuers in the rear. It was a critical position, if any in the history of a nation. Darkness fell upon a scene of utter confusion and despair.

But the faith of one man did not waver, the man who had communed with Yahweh on the mountain. In the darkness of the night he heard a sound that no one understood but he. An east wind had begun to blow. It grew until it was a gale. It chased the shallow waters south of the Bitter Lakes, that centuries later Nekau deepened into a canal, and finished the work begun by the receding tide. A passage could be effected. Major Palmer, deriving much information from Captain J. S. Murray, a close observer of the winds and tides in the Gulf of Suez, says in his work on Sinai, now revised by Professor Sayce<sup>1</sup>: "The true direction of this wind was probably from a point to the north of east. The direct effect of such a wind upon the water in the channel and the lakes, or tongue of sea to the northward, would be inconsiderable. But its indirect influence on the level of the shallow water in the channel, already lowered by the ebbing tide, would before long be very marked. A northeasterly gale, on reaching Suez, would thence be drawn down between the high ranges which bound the gulf on either hand in such a manner as to change its direction from northeast to north and even a little west of north. It would gather strength as it advanced, and by its action on an ebb-tide produce so great an

<sup>1</sup>*Sinai*, p. 169.

out-draught of water from the upper part of the gulf that there would be an abnormally low tide; while so long as the wind remained northerly and strong, the return of the usual flood-tide would, for a time at least, be prevented." The moon did not rise until near midnight. As soon as the light permitted, the pursuers followed. But their chariots were caught in the seaweed and the returning tide drowned horse and rider.

A wonderful deliverance had been wrought; the enemy completely routed, the people safe upon the eastern shore. And it was the work of Yahweh. His wind had blown the entire night; the angry waves had felt his breath and vanished. To him the song was sung, the song of redemption, Ex. 15: 21. "Sing ye to Yahweh, for he has greatly glorified himself." "The horse and his rider hath he overthrown into the sea." Delivered by Yahweh the people can no longer doubt his power, and his servant Moses is willingly followed as he directs the march towards the mountain home of his god. Skirting the Jebel et Tih they touch again the gulf at El Merkha, the wilderness of Sin. Here hunger creates rebellion. But the authority of Moses and the faith in Yahweh are saved by an opportune flight of quails and by the *man* exuding from the *tarfah* tree, the use and nutritive value of which Moses was able to indicate. The Egyptian garrisons at Sarabit el Khadim and Maghara may not have been very dangerous at this time. As they marched up Wady Feiran they were destined to meet more formidable enemies. First a water famine, than which few things have more terror for the nomad. A supply of water was obtained, however, probably at Hesy el Khittatin, where Moses, struck with his staff a place where from a rocky surface a stream gushed forth. A worse foe awaited them before they reached the oasis. This glorious valley belonged to the Amalekites. Here were their pasture grounds and homes. To defend their own they had drawn together their forces. At Rephidim, perchance in the neighborhood of the modern Jebel et Tahunch, it came to conflict. The Amalekites fought, as only Arabs can, for their beloved wadies. But they could not prevail against the fierce invaders who for the first time battled for their God, the won-



MOUNT SINAI.

derful deliverer and supporter. Wady Feiran was lost to them, and bloody sacrifices on the altar of "Yahweh Nisi" sealed vows of everlasting hatred for the nation that had been bold enough to defend their homes against the invading hosts and their mightier God. The victory also brought the Midianites around, and from his more experienced kinsmen Moses received much valuable help, both in regard to the social organization of the people and the proper worship of Yahweh. For the last purpose chiefly they marched together to Mount Sinai.

On the plain of Er Rahah the people encamped over against Ras Safsafah. There was the mountain that might be touched rising steeply before them to a height of about 2000 feet. When, in Palæozoic times, this region emerged as an island from the sea, that Nubian sandstone with its warm tints of brown and red heaped itself on the gneissic rocks of myrtle green streaked with dikes of purple, black, and other sombre hues. A majestic pile, a temple of dazzling beauty, lifting its pinnacles to the blue dome of heaven, in the eternal stillness of the desert! But presently the sky is overcast with clouds, lightnings surround the mountain, peal upon peal of thunder reverberates among the rocks. These are the manifestations of Yakweh's presence. Stout hearts are terrified amid these giant structures and this awful play of mysterious forces. But one there is who knows no fear, the man who stood between the mountains and the sea and the Egyptian hosts, calmly expecting Yahweh's help. Alone he climbs the highest peak to meet his God; alone he dwells for days with him in holy converse. While his own flesh and blood beneath the mountain cannot yet rise above the grossest symbolism, he sits in solitude with the invisible. What passed between the God of Sinai and his devotee, nay, better, between the Eternal Father and his child, we know it not. It is his secret. When he returned a light shone on his countenance, the light that evermore illumines the face of him who lives with God.

Tradition says that in his hands he held two stones, afterwards kept within the ark. Was there a writing on these stones? Could Moses write? This question is not easily answered. The Egyptians, Babylonians and Hittites had their systems of writing

and their scribes who knew the art. In Palestine, while under Egyptian rule, the Amorites had scribes acquainted with Babylonian script and language. Assyria, Mitani and other kingdoms likewise had adopted the cuneiform characters, and a modification of the Hittite hieroglyphics was early introduced in Cyprus. On the other hand, no Aramaic or Chaldæan inscriptions from this age have yet been found, and it is almost certain that in spite of their achievements in other arts the men of Mycenæ, Tirys, Orchomenos, and Troy knew not how to write their own euphonious names<sup>1</sup>. Whether the Minæan inscriptions date back to this time is yet a mooted question; and even if citizens of Main knew the alphabet, it is far from certain that Midian had acquired the knowledge. It is said that Moses may have learnt the art in Egypt. But Egyptian hieroglyphics written by him would have been as unintelligible in the Israel of the next century as they were to the European nations of the last. When the alphabet was introduced among the Semites and how it originated we do not know. The earliest alphabetic inscriptions, aside from the Minæan possibly, are Hiram's of Tyre, of the tenth century, Mesa's of Moab, and the elder Panamu's of Yaudi, of the ninth. Many signs seem to show that the alphabet had been in use for some time then.<sup>2</sup> But the wedge-shaped characters were still employed in the fourteenth century in Palestine. In spite of our growing knowledge of this age we lack the necessary data for determining whether Israel learnt how to write in Palestine or brought this useful art from the desert to the civilized Amorites who once had known how to use the cuneiform characters. The former supposition still remains most probable. But many a song and saying may have been written down at an early date after the invasion. Thus, even if Moses could not write himself, or only in a manner unintelligible to his people in the coming generations, words that he uttered may have been learned by heart and more or less accurately written down afterwards.

<sup>1</sup>The spindles with inscriptions noticed by Sayce in Schliemann's *Ilios*, p. 766, ff. were probably imported from Cyprus.

<sup>2</sup>W. Max Muller, *loc. cit.*, p. 169, has skilfully demonstrated that Shoshenk's list was drawn from a Semitic original already written alphabetically.

Withal, this mighty seer was a child of his own age. It is pathetic to a degree to observe how in yielding to his people's demand that they be brought from these barren, rugged solitudes to some place more suitable to tastes developed in the settled life of Egypt, his soul is wrestling with the awful thought that Yahweh cannot leave his mountain home. How deep is his attachment to his Saviour-God! Only the fiction of a *Malak* Yahweh, which may be the creation of his own struggling faith, could reconcile him to the necessity of departing. The ark, probably like the Egyptian "ark of Ma," the Babylonian *parakku*, made of *sittah*-wood (*Acacia seila*) that grows around Sinai, with its tent reminding of "the sacred tent" of another Semitic people, the Carthaginians, may have owed its origin to the same feeling. As in the case of "the messenger," now referred to as Yahweh, now as a being different from him, so the ark also is in an ancient song of the wilderness addressed as Yahweh. "Up, Yahweh!" Israel sung to the ark before the battle. "Return, O Yahweh," was the song when the ark was brought back.

Yet, after all, what treasures Moses brought away from Sanai! He had given to his people Yahweh. The fears and the hopes, the gratitude and the pride, the love and the adoration of these tribes were now concentrated with greatest intensity upon a single God. In the soul's communion with him upon the mountain, lightning and thunder, but no earthly image, symbolized his presence. However important the cult may have appeared—and it was in the fire of the altar and the cloud of ascending smoke that "the angel" led the way—the will of Yahweh was, above all, that right be done and moral wrong be shunned. This is the Mosaic foundation on which the later prophets stood. This is the germ from which our Christian faith has sprung.

From the sacred mountain the people marched toward the Akabah, touching at Ain, but settling permanently only when they had captured Ain Kadis, Kadesh or En Mishpat, where the sacred fountain was. This became their new center. Here Moses gave the world his second gift, Israel. Before the gates of Kadesh swept the mightiest movements of the age. The Palestinian

Arsu, who in 1255 usurped the throne of Egypt, may have come this way with his hosts. Soon after Shulmanasharid I. marched with his Assyrians past this holy place to Mutsri. It is possible that a little to the east of Kadesh Yadiyatha, King of Main, fought with the northern conquerer. About 1230 the Aryan swarms fell upon Palestine and rushed past Kadesh on to Egypt. Ramessu III. seems to have met and defeated them not far from here. This formative period in Israel's history is prophetic of its future destiny. Between the struggling kingdoms of the East and the West, the North and the South, it must unfold its own peculiar theocratic life. That Israel belongs to Yahweh, this is the theocratic thought, and this is Moses' own conception. There would have been no Israel but for this thought. Yisrael means El fights, but the El who fights for Moses' people is Yahweh.

What constituted this original Israel? We cannot say with certainty. But the consciousness that the tribes of Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher<sup>1</sup>, do not belong to Israel in the same sense as the others is clearly expressed in the fact that they are made in Genesis sons of the concubines, and not the wives, of Jacob. Benjamin is also said to have been born in later time in Palestine. Some scholars<sup>2</sup> hold that the six Leah tribes and Joseph formed a league of seven tribes, with their religious and political center for awhile in Kadesh. The tribe of Joseph, however, that settled earlier than his brothers in the Egyptian borderland, never returned to Palestine. His place is taken by Ephraim who, according to the song of Deborah, had his root in Amalek and Manasseh. Where Judah had "his root" we would be fain to know. The Amarna tablets point to Northern Syria, and in Patina-Padam there was a kingdom called Yaudi, whence the Sinjirli inscriptions have come. The separation of Judah from his brothers complained of in a later time by the blessing of Jacob, runs back so far as history can see. And yet there was probably an early point of contact. Was this at Kadesh? Wherever the elements may have come from—and the political

<sup>1</sup> Asher was settled on the Mediterranean coast already in the time of Dehutmose III.; and Asherite clans appear in the Amarna tablets.

<sup>2</sup> So Wellhausen, *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte*, p. 12.

storms of the century would naturally drive apart and draw together nations—under the master-hand of Moses Israel was blended into a nation. By the sacred fountain he gave oracles and held the clans together, while they sought pasture grounds far and wide, made their raids into the Negeb, and sent their spies to regions further north. For Palestine to them as to many other nomads was the land of desire, the land their hearts and oracles promised them.

A favorable opportunity came. The northern invasion had crushed the power of the Hittites. Ramessu III. had indeed raided Palestine, but could not hold it in subjection. The Amorites were free for a moment to extend their territory. East of the Jordan, where Moab and Ammon had dwelt, Sihon founded a kingdom with Heshbon for its capital, and Og another kingdom north of that in Bashan, with Edrei for its chief city. Whether these Amorites came over from the other side the Jordan or invaded from the north, is impossible to determine. How this impressed the little Hebrew kingdoms of Moab and Ammon, now driven south of the Arnon, may easily be imagined. At this juncture the Israelites came as if they had been sent for. No doubt in league with their nearer kinsmen, the Israelites attacked the king of Heshbon and took the city, as an ancient song bears witness, and it seems probable that soon after the king of Bashan likewise succumbed. Thus Israel took his place beside his older brothers east of the Jordan, *ca.* 1210, B. C.

Was this to be the end? The Israelitish tribes reaping the fields they had not sown, drinking the wine of Heshbon, gathering the balms of Gilead, establishing themselves in the strong cities of Bashan, may well have thought so. But there was one who could not yet be satisfied, whose zeal for Yahweh and for Israel drove him in restless longing to the mountain peaks of Moab, whence his eagle eye could see the land beyond the Jordan, the snowy brow of Hermon, the templed hills, the sacred terebinths, the sea where the sun sets. There, too, the mighty deeds of Yahweh must be known; those hills and dales must once belong to Israel. He was alone, as long ago he was at Horeb when first he heard the voice of Yahweh; alone as in his stalwart

faith he was upon the shore of the Red Sea; alone as many a time when in the sacred tent he laid the burdens a hard-hearted people made him bear, upon his God; alone at last on Pisgah. From Horeb he went forth to Egypt, from the divine presence to the work of deliverance. From Sinai he came down to give divine instruction to his people. From Pisgah's top he never came. No man could ever point a stranger to his tomb. No sacrificial offering was ever to be placed before the sepulchre of him whose glory was to be the servant of Yahweh. He who loved so well the mountain solitude found his end in one of these solitary rambles, alone with Yahweh in his death, as he had been so often in his life. "And Yahweh buried him upon the mount."

In all the great movements of the age there was a striving, consciously or unconsciously, after a nobler social life, a purer religious faith. That Israel's contribution, seen in the light of history, was so rich, is no doubt due in the first place to the remarkable circumstances under which the nation was formed. The way of Israel was a *via crucis*. It was not possible for the scions to forget that their sires had once been slaves in Egypt, for their glory was so closely bound up with their shame. Having known what suffering was, the nation learned to succor those that suffer. The tender regard for the widow and the orphan, the needy and the oppressed, so marked at all times in Israel, sprang from the painful memory of Egyptian bondage. Restraint in Egypt, where nature was as generous as rich, and freedom in the desert amid a nature as penurious as chaste, this seems an irony of fate, but was a double blessing. For thus were blended a wholesome love of settled life not satisfied until the Jordan had been passed, with the nomad's robust sense of right and sturdy independence. In another point of view, the recognition of the supremacy of Yahweh was immensely furthered by the fact that previous to the great events ascribed to him there was no national life, no widespread and elaborate cult of other gods in Israel. What might have become of Khu en Aten's monotheistic reform, had Egypt been young and Amen Ra had no Theban priesthood? Or of Assurahiiddin's attempt to suppress the worship of every god but Nabu, had not Assur been to his people the vanquisher

of the gods of the nations, and had there been fewer rival cults in Assyria and Babylonia.

But while circumstances may favor new developments, men make them. Without Moses, or a man like him, there would have been neither a God like Yahweh, nor a people like Israel. He was the hero of the age, the founder of the nation, the great *kahin*, seer and priest in one. He felt the hand of Yahweh in the wind; he heard the voice of Yahweh in the storm; he formed the tribes into a Yahweh people. He stamped his faith upon the nation. When century after century laid its wisest regulations for daily life and divine worship on the lips of Moses, that fiction held profoundest truth. For Moses spoke—and these thoughts filled the minds of Israel's leaders. Had he been silent, they would not have had the basis for their message. The great redeeming truths that blossom out in Israel's later life are all in germ in those great deeds of his that better than recorded words reflect the inmost movements of his thought. As to the greatest of the apostles the cross of Christ revealed the character of his Lord and became the center of his system of thought, almost to the complete exclusion of the words reported; so may to us the *gesta Mosis* interpret, where words fail, the thoughts, the purposes, the nature of the man.

But what made Moses what he was? An illusion, a fabric woven of the stuff that dreams are made of? I cannot so believe. Back of the marvelous play of seeming chance and circumstance, back of the apparently free and conscious movement of a soul, there was the everlasting power that works for righteousness, the Father of our spirits. Without his will no wind can blow, no thunder roar, no battle turn to victory, no nation form; without his inspiration no sense of right, no love of truth unfold in a prophetic soul. Our modern estimate of the universe can recognize no chance, no accident within; no arbitrariness, no whim without. But will not the increasing light reveal a nicer adjustment than we have ever dreamed of yet between the law-bound course of nature and the unfolding purpose of man's history? The wind that blew across the Erythræan obeyed the laws determining the course of every wind, the mind interpreting that wind

followed the laws determining the movements of all psychic forces. But what of the concurrence of this mighty wind and the still mightier faith? Was that an accident? Shall we not rather say that both were necessary parts of the one divinely ordered evolution of our planet's life? Not only in the things around us, but in our own souls, too, the God we know is immanent. Thus it is true, if we but read it rightly, that the living God had speech with Moses and speaks to us through him.

There are no leaps in nature, and there are none in human history, but when the time is ripe a child is born in Goshen, or in Bethlehem, to teach mankind the holier name, the truer character of God, to rule with spirit-force all coming generations and thus to make more just and pure and kind the life of man, to be our sureties of the coming good. However long the pilgrimage may be, the promised land is yonder. The day will come, for come it must, when wooed from ignorance and sin and misery by faithful human leadership and constant heavenly inspiration, the sons of men shall draw with gratitude from every age and clime the grace and truth that it brought forth, thereby to nourish and enrich their life. As in that day, the bearers of glad tidings to mankind, the lifters up of goodlier ideals, the potent personal forces working out the destiny of the race, stand forth in clearer light, redeemed humanity shall sing in louder strain, with sweeter voice, the song of Moses and the Lamb.